

COVID-19 Risks and Vaccine Information for Older Adults

Older unvaccinated adults are more likely to be hospitalized or die from COVID-19

Update

Getting vaccinated prevents severe illness, hospitalizations, and death. People 65 and older who received both doses of either Pfizer or Moderna vaccines showed a 94% reduced risk of COVID-19 related hospitalization. Unvaccinated people should get vaccinated and continue masking until they are fully vaccinated. With the Delta variant, this is more urgent than ever. CDC has updated [guidance for fully vaccinated people](#) based on new evidence on the Delta variant.

Vaccine Information for [Older Adults](#).



Risk Increases With Age

The risk for severe illness with COVID-19 increases with age, with older adults at highest risk.

What you need to know

- Older unvaccinated adults are more likely to be hospitalized or die.
- Get vaccinated as soon as possible. COVID-19 [vaccines](#) are effective in preventing COVID-19 and are recommended for [everyone 12 years of age and older](#).
- Older adults, and those who live with, visit or provide care for them, need to take preventive measures to protect themselves from getting COVID-19.
- Preventive measures include [getting vaccinated](#) [wearing a mask](#), [practicing physical distancing](#), and [washing hands](#).

Increased Risk of Severe Illness from COVID-19

Older adults are more likely to get very sick from COVID-19. Getting very sick means that older adults with COVID-19 might need hospitalization, intensive care, or a ventilator to help them breathe, or they might even die. **The risk increases for people in their 50s and increases in 60s, 70s, and 80s. People 85 and older are the most likely to get very sick.**

Other factors can also make you more likely to get severely ill with COVID-19, such as having [certain underlying medical conditions](#). If you have an underlying medical condition, you should continue to follow your [treatment plan](#), unless advised differently by your health care provider.

Protect Yourself & Others from Getting COVID-19

Older adults, and those who live with, visit or provide care for them need, to take steps to protect themselves from getting COVID-19.

- Get vaccinated as soon as possible.
 - COVID-19 [vaccines](#) are effective in preventing COVID-19 and are recommended for [everyone 12 years of age and older](#).
 - [If you are fully vaccinated](#) you can resume activities that you did prior to the pandemic without wearing a mask or staying 6 feet apart, except where required by federal, state, local, tribal, or territorial laws, rules, and regulations, including local business and workplace guidance.
- If you are not fully vaccinated and aged 2 or older, you should wear a mask in indoor public places.
- In general, you do not need to wear a mask in outdoor settings.
 - In areas with [high numbers of COVID-19 cases](#), consider wearing a mask in crowded outdoor settings and for activities with close contact with others who are not fully vaccinated.
- People who have a condition or are taking medications that weaken their immune system may NOT be protected even if they are fully vaccinated. They should continue to take all [precautions recommended for unvaccinated people, including wearing a well-fitted mask](#), until advised otherwise by their healthcare provider.
- If you are fully vaccinated, see [When You've Been Fully Vaccinated](#).
- Limit your in-person interactions with other people as much as possible, particularly when indoors.
- Keep space between yourself and others (stay 6 feet away, which is about 2 arm lengths).
- [Wash your hands](#) often. If soap and water are not readily available, use a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue or the inside of your elbow. Then wash your hands.
- [Clean and disinfect surfaces](#) and things you touch often.

The more people you interact with, the more closely you interact with them, and the longer that interaction, **the more likely you are** to get or spread the virus that causes COVID-19.

Get vaccinated as soon as possible. COVID-19 [vaccines](#) are effective in preventing COVID-19 and are recommended for [everyone 12 years of age and older](#).

Adults 65 years old and older who were fully vaccinated with an mRNA COVID-19 vaccine (Pfizer-BioNTech or Moderna) had a 94% reduction in risk of COVID-19 hospitalizations and vaccination was 64% effective among those who were partially vaccinated (Pfizer-BioNTech or Moderna).

If You Are Sick or Think You Were Exposed to COVID-19

Contact Your Healthcare Provider and Seek Care

- If you think you might have been exposed to someone with COVID-19, you may need to get tested. Check CDC [information for who should be tested](#), and visit your [state](#), [tribal](#), [local](#) [🔗](#), and [territorial health department's website](#) to look for the latest local information on testing.

If you have a medical emergency, do not delay seeking emergency care.

If you start showing symptoms of COVID-19:

- Call your healthcare provider, [get tested](#), and follow steps for [when you feel sick](#). If you don't have a healthcare provider, contact your nearest [community health center](#) [↗](#) or [health department](#). You can also visit your state, tribal, local, or territorial [health department's website](#) to look for the latest local information on testing.
- If you need [emergency help](#), call 911 right away.

If you are unsure whether you are showing symptoms of COVID-19, use the [coronavirus self-checker](#) to help you decide.

Fever Temperatures in Older Adults

If you are an older adult (aged 65 or older) or caring for an older adult, be aware that a single temperature reading higher than 100°F (37.8°C), multiple readings above 99°F (37.2°C), or a rise in temperature greater than 2°F (1.1°C) above the person's normal (baseline) temperature may be a sign of infection. In older adults, normal body temperatures can be lower than in younger adults. For this reason, fever temperatures can also be lower.

Visiting Older Adults in Residential Communities

Residential communities for older adults may combine nursing, assisted living, and independent living lifestyles. Each community may face different risks and decide to put in place less restrictive or more restrictive protocols.

To help protect friends and family members who live in these communities, get [vaccinated](#). CDC has also issued updated recommendations for [visitations](#) at post-acute facilities. These recommendations align with the [Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services \(CMS\)](#) [↗](#) guidance for visitations under various circumstances.

Learn more about the risks among people who live in nursing homes or long-term care facilities and about CDC's guidance for preventing the spread COVID-19 infection in [nursing homes](#).

There is no way to ensure you have zero risk of getting the virus that causes COVID-19. So, it is important to understand the risks and know how to reduce your risk as much as possible if or when you do [resume some activities](#), [run errands](#), and [attend events and gatherings](#).

More Information

[COVID-19 Guidance for Older Adults](#)

[Other People Who Need Extra Precautions](#)

[Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Frequently Asked Questions](#)

[COVID-19 Vaccination Frequently Asked Questions](#)

[List of COVID-19 Resources for Community-Dwelling Older Adults](#)

[Guidance for Adult Day Services Centers Administrators and Staff](#)

[Serious Illness Care Program COVID-19 Response Toolkit](#) [↗](#)

[Eldercare Locator](#) [↗](#) or call 1-800-677-1116.